

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAMA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 161678

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: MARR, BA

SUBJECT: RETENTION OF MIDEASTFOR AT BAHRAIN

1. AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING FOR A NUMBER OF MONTHS WITH GOB REGARDING TERMS OF MIDEASTFOR'S REMAINING AT BAHRAIN. ALTHOUGH SPECIFIC POINTS WERE ALL AGREED ON IN PRINCIPLE SOME MONTHS AGO, GOB DELAYED AGREEING TO EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WHICH WOULD MARK SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF NEGOTIATIONS. VERY RECENTLY, GOB FONMIN TOLD OUR AMBASSADOR THAT GOB WAS NOW AGREEABLE TO WINDING UP NEGOTS BUT WISHED FORMALLY TO ESTABLISH JUNE 30, 1977 AS FINAL DATE FOR MIDEASTFOR'S REMAINING AT BAHRAIN. WE NOW HAVE UNDER REVIEW
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HOW TO RESPOND TO GOB. BASICALLY, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MIDEASTFOR REMAIN AT BAHRAIN WITHOUT FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT AT THIS TIME OF ANY SPECIFIC DEADLINE FOR ITS DEPARTURE. THERE ARE REASONS OF BAHRAINI DOMESTIC POLITICS WHY GOB

MAY SEE IT USEFUL TO SET SUCH DEADLINE, BUT CERTAIN FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS ARE ALSO ENTERING INTO GOB'S THINKING. ONE OF THESE IS CURRENT DISCUSSION REGARDING A POSSIBLE SECURITY ARRANGEMENT AMONG THE VARIOUS GULF STATES. ANOTHER FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATION FOR GOB RELATES TO ATTITUDE OF KEY GULF STATES ON MIDEASTFOR ITSELF. THERE HAVE BEEN STATEMENTS WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS SIGNIFYING THAT THEY WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE MIDEASTFOR REMOVED FROM

BAHRAIN. ON OTHER HAND, WE ARE AWARE THAT SUCH STATEMENTS MADE ON ONE PUBLIC OCCASION OR ANOTHER DID NOT REFLECT ACTUAL INTENTION OF THE GOVERNMENT CONCERNED. LAST YEAR, AS YOU KNOW, BOTH SAG AND GOI PRIVATELY URGED GOB TO WITHDRAW ITS OCTOBER 1973 ORDER AND WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT WITH THE USG UNDER WHICH MIDEASTFOR COULD REMAIN AT BAHRAIN. WE HAVE NOTED THAT SHAH'S CURRENT PROPOSAL FOR GULF SECURITY PACT ENVISAGES THAT THERE BE NO "FOREIGN BASES" AND NO "FOREIGN POWERS" IN GULF (TEHRAN 6438). WE HAVE ASSUMED WITH REGARD TO MIDEASTFOR THAT GOI VIEW ON TIMING IS OPEN-ENDED AND THAT IT SEES EVENTUAL DEPARTURE OF MIDEASTFOR AS LINKED TO (AND CONTINGENT ON) FINAL REGIONAL AGREEMENT WHICH DEALS EFFECTIVELY WITH SOVIET PRESENCE IN IRAQ.

2. WE ANTICIPATE MIDEASTFOR MAY COME UP FOR DISCUSSION AT FORTHCOMING ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING IN JIDDA. GIVEN KEY POSITION OF SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN AND CLOSENESS OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THEM, WE WISH TO INFORM THEM OF CURRENT STATE OF OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH GOB AND SOUND OUT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL TO US ON THIS MATTER IN CONVERSATIONS WITH GOB FOREIGN MINISTER AT JIDDA CONFERENCE.

3. FOR JIDDA: YOU SHOULD SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH PRINCE SAUD AND SAY THAT, IN ACCORD WITH OUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP AND SPECIFICALLY RECALLING OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH SAUDI LEADERS (SUCH AS PRINCE FAHD) REGARDING MIDEASTFOR OVER SECRET

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THE COURSE OF THE PAST YEAR, WE WISH SAG TO BE INFORMED IN CONFIDENCE REGARDING CURRENT STATUS OF OUR TALKS WITH GOB. WE HAVE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE WITH ALL THE SPECIFIC POINTS SOUGHT BY GOB, INCLUDING INCREASE IN RENT (FROM UNDER 700,000 DOLS ANNUALLY TO FOUR MILLION DOLS), CLARIFICATION OF CERTAIN MATTERS OF CRIMINAL JURISDICTION OVER USG PERSONNEL, AND INFORMAL REDUCTION FROM ONE YEAR TO SIX MONTHS IN NOTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR ENDING USG-GOB AGREEMENT MIDEASTFOR. AFTER SOME MONTHS OF DELAY, GOB FOREIGN MINISTER RECENTLY INFORMED OUR AMBASSADOR IN MANAMA THAT GOB IS NOW WILLING TO WIND UP THE NEGOTIATIONS BUT THAT IT WISHES AT SAME TIME FORMALLY TO ESTABLISH JUNE 30, 1977 AS THE FINAL DATE BY WHICH MIDEASTFOR WILL LEAVE BAHRAIN.

YOU SHOULD TELL SAUD THAT WE HAVE ENJOYED EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH GOB, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT GOB SINCERELY WISHES TO MAINTAIN POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH US, AND THAT WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT SUCH A RELATIONSHIP BE MAINTAINED. WE ARE AWARE OF VARIOUS PRESSURES ON GOB WHICH HAVE PRESUMABLY LED IT TO BELIEVE THAT SPECIFIC TERMINATION DATE SHOULD NOW BE ESTABLISHED FOR MIDEASTFOR'S REMAINING AT BAHRAIN. FACTORS WHICH WE PRESUME HAVE

ENTERED INTO GOB THINKING INCLUDE CURRENT DISCUSSION OF A POSSIBLE SECURITY ARRANGEMENT OF SOME TYPE AMONG THE GULF STATES, UNDER WHICH ALL FOREIGN FORCES WOULD LEAVE THE GULF; AND THE SPECIFIC ATTITUDE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GULF STATES REGARDING MIDEASTFOR ITSELF. WE ARE UNINFORMED AS TO HOW THE DISCUSSION REGARDING A GULF SECURITY ARRANGEMENT MAY RELATE EITHER IN SUBSTANCE OR IN TIMING TO THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF MIDEASTFOR AT BAHRAIN. AS FOR THE SAG'S ATTITUDE TOWARD MIDEASTFOR, USG HAS BEEN DEEPLY APPRECIATIVE OF THE POSITIVE AND VERY HELPFUL INITIATIVE WHICH SAG TOOK NOT TOO LONG AGO TO ENCOURAGE GOB TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT WITH USG SO THAT MIDEASTFOR COULD REMAIN AT BAHRAIN.

4. YOU SHOULD ADD THAT WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE UNHELPFUL TO HAVE A SPECIFIC TERMINATION DATE FOR MIDEASTFOR SET AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME WHEN USG IS INTENSIVELY INVOLVED IN CONTINUING EFFORTS TO HELP LAY BASIS FOR A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND ALSO AT A TIME WHEN USSR
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HAS BEEN STEPPING UP ITS OWN EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH AN IMPORTANT NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE NORTHWESTERN INDIAN OCEAN REGION. WE TRUST THAT SAG SEES THIS ISSUE IN THE SAME LIGHT. IF SO, IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF CLARIFICATION OF SAG'S ATTITUDE TOWARD MIDEASTFOR, AND SPECIFICALLY ON UNDESIRABILITY OF ATTEMPTING NOW TO SET A TERMINATION DATE, COULD BE CONVEYED TO GOB - PERHAPS DURING COURSE OF FORTHCOMING ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE.

5. FOR TEHRAN: AT YOUR DISCRETION (HAVING IN MIND YOUR JULY 5 AUDIENCE WITH SHAH), YOU SHOULD SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KHALATBARY AND MAKE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME POINTS AS OUTLINED ABOVE. YOU SHOULD RECALL EXPLICITLY THE VERY HELPFUL ATTITUDE SHOWN BY HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY AND FOREIGN MINISTER LAST YEAR. YOU SHOULD ALSO RECALL KHALATBARY'S CONVERSATION HERE IN MAY WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SOBER, FOLLOWING WHICH WE UNDERSTAND APPROPRIATE CLARIFICATION OF GOI VIEWS ON MIDEASTFOR WAS CONVEYED TO GOB - A STEP FOR WHICH WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL TO KHALATBARY. ASSUMING THAT GOI POSITION ON THIS MATTER HAS NOT CHANGED, AND WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BOTH TIMELY AND HELPFUL FOR IT TO BE CONVEYED AGAIN TO GOB - PERHAPS

AT FORTHCOMING JIDDA CONFERENCE - WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE
TO NOT RPT NOT FIXING A GIVEN TERMINATION DATE AT THIS
TIME WHEN ONE CANNOT BE AT ALL SURE THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN
THE COMING MONTHS WILL NOT MAKE IT STRONGLY DESIRABLE THAT
MIDEASTFOR STAY ON WITHOUT A DEADLINE FOR ITS DEPARTURE.
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